

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying
2 sale, comprising:

3 communicating to a supplier a featured item quantity and a featured item
4 time reservation;

5 receiving the supplier's consent to reserve the featured item quantity and
6 the negotiated featured item time reservation;

7 conducting an on-line group-buying sale for the featured item during the
8 featured item time reservation, selling at least a portion of the featured item quantity to
9 one or more buyers; and

10 sending shipment instructions to the supplier regarding featured items sold
11 in the on-line group-buying sale.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 executing a binding agreement with the supplier regarding the featured item
3 quantity and the featured item time reservation, wherein the binding agreement requires
4 the supplier to retain the featured item quantity for the featured item time reservation.

1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

2 providing the supplier with consideration in exchange for the supplier's
3 execution of the binding agreement.

1 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the consideration is at least one of a
2 reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 communicating to the supplier payment terms regarding the featured item
3 to be sold during the on-line group-buying sale before conducting the on-line group-
4 buying sale; and
5 paying the supplier for a number of featured items sold during the on-line
6 group-buying sale.

1 6. A method for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying
2 sale, comprising:
3 receiving from a seller a featured item quantity and a featured item time
4 reservation;
5 negotiating with the seller to determine a negotiated featured item quantity
6 and a negotiated featured item time reservation;
7 executing a binding agreement with the seller regarding the negotiated
8 featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation, wherein the
9 binding agreement requires retention of the negotiated featured item quantity for the
10 negotiated featured item time reservation; and
11 receiving shipment instructions from the seller regarding a number of
12 featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

1 7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
2 retrieving the number of featured items sold during the on-line group-
3 buying sale from a warehouse; and
4 packaging the number of featured items sold during the on-line group-
5 buying sale for shipment to buyers.

8. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
receiving consideration from the seller in exchange for executing the
binding agreement.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the consideration comprises at least
one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

10. The method of claim 6 wherein the negotiated featured item quantity
equals the featured item quantity.

11. The method of claim 6 wherein the negotiated featured item time
reservation equals the featured item time reservation.

12. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
communicating to the seller payment terms regarding the featured items to
be sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

13. A computing system for sourcing a featured item for an on-line
group-buying sale, comprising:
a supplier communications module configured to send a supplier a featured
item quantity and a featured item time reservation;
a virtual inventory module configured to receive the supplier's consent to
reserve a negotiated featured item quantity and a negotiated featured item time
reservation; and
an on-line group-buying mechanism configured to conduct at least one on-
line group-buying sale during the negotiated featured item time reservation, selling at
least a portion of the negotiated featured item quantity to one or more buyers.

1 14. The system of claim 13 wherein the virtual inventor module is
2 further configured to receive a binding agreement from the supplier regarding the
3 negotiated featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation,
4 wherein the binding agreement requires the supplier to retain the negotiated featured item
5 quantity for the negotiated featured item time reservation.

1 15. The system of claim 13, further comprising:
2 a data repository configured to retain data regarding the negotiated featured
3 item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation.

1 16. The system of claim 13 wherein the supplier communications
2 module is further configured to send shipment instructions to the supplier regarding a
3 number of featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

1 17. The system of claim 13 wherein the supplier communications
2 module is further configured to provide the supplier with data regarding the seller's
3 consideration for obtaining the supplier's consent to be contractually bound to retain the
4 negotiated featured item quantity for the negotiated time duration.

1 18. The system of claim 17 wherein the consideration data comprises at
2 least one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

1 19. The system of claim 13 wherein the negotiated featured item
2 quantity equals the featured item quantity.

1 20. The system of claim 13 wherein the negotiated feature item time
2 reservation equals the featured item time reservation.